

**Beaver County
New Brighton District Court
36-3-01**

**Audit Report
For the Period January 2006 through December 2007**

**David A. Rossi
Beaver County Controller**

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DAVID A. ROSSI
CONTROLLER



WILLIAM CALHOON
CHIEF DEPUTY CONTROLLER
ALBERT A. TORRENCE
SOLICITOR

BEAVER COUNTY COURTHOUSE
THIRD STREET - BEAVER, PENNSYLVANIA 15009-2196
TELEPHONE: Area Code 724-728-5700

July 16, 2008

Mr. Dale F. Nicholson
District Court 36-3-01
513 11th Street
New Brighton, PA 15066

Dear Mr. Nicholson:

We have audited the financial records of District Court 36-3-01 in the county of Beaver of the state of Pennsylvania for the period January 1, 2006 through December 31, 2007. Based upon the audit we have issued our report thereon dated July 16, 2008.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted governmental auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

Based upon our review of the financial records, we have made the following observation and recommendation as detailed in this report.

David A. Rossi

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Beaver County Controller

AUDIT SCOPE:

The scope of this audit encompasses the period from January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES:

Through the completion of internal control questionnaires, control tests, substantive tests, and observation, the following audit objectives were accomplished for this audit:

- Prepare a financial statement for each year reviewed
- Evaluate controls over the District Court checking account
- Ensure that funds are deposited on the same day received
- Ensure that funds received are disbursed to the proper payees
- Ensure that funds held in escrow are adequate
- Ensure that funds receipted are applied to the proper case
- Ensure that costs and fines are properly split upon receipt
- Ensure that reports and funds due to the Commonwealth were correct and remitted in a timely manner
- Ensure that proper documentation was maintained in the case file
- Evaluate the controls over cash
- Evaluate the controls over purchasing and the administration of the budget
- Evaluate controls over general office procedures

**DISTRICT COURT 36-3-01
STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2006**

Beginning cash balance (1/1/2006) **\$ 14,259.85**

Receipts:

Traffic	\$ 243,964.87
Non-Traffic	118,890.99
Criminal, Civil, etc.	35,573.75
Collateral	<u>30,284.92</u>

Total receipts 428,714.53

Disbursements:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	\$ 238,651.78
Beaver County	55,057.61
New Brighton Boro	48,618.96
Restitution & Refund Bail / Collateral	33,359.64
Server Fees	25,365.06
North Sewickley Township	6,879.31
Franklin Township	5,246.85
Marion Township	2,870.72
Daugherty Township	2,520.45
Pulaski Township	1,781.75
New Brighton Area School District	1,592.38
Riverside School District	1,251.53
Ellwood City Boro	1,134.40
Fallston Boro	<u>6.65</u>

Total disbursements (424,337.09)

Adjustments:

Adjustment for void checks 377.30

Ending cash balance (12/31/2006) **\$ 19,014.59**

**DISTRICT COURT 36-3-01
STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENSES
FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2007**

Beginning cash balance (1/1/2007) **\$ 19,014.59**

Receipts:

Traffic	\$ 253,071.16
Non-Traffic	129,462.70
Criminal, Civil, etc.	37,168.79
Collateral	<u>34,969.94</u>

Total receipts 454,672.59

Disbursements:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania	\$ 257,817.29
Beaver County	61,123.79
New Brighton Boro	56,463.37
Restitution & Refund Bail / Collateral	26,353.10
Server Fees	24,818.34
North Sewickley Township	14,095.94
Franklin Township	4,769.31
New Brighton Area School District	3,318.67
Pulaski Township	2,686.98
Daugherty Township	2,037.75
Ellwood City Boro	2,017.61
Riverside School District	1,585.28
Marion Township	<u>1,210.33</u>

Total disbursements (458,297.76)

Adjustments:

Adjustment for void checks	331.30
Return items not on the computer	<u>(409.00)</u>

Ending cash balance (12/31/2007) **\$ 15,311.72**

DISTRICT COURT 36-3-01
NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 1, 2006 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2007

Note 1: Summary of Significant Accounting Policies - District Court 36-3-01 reports on the cash basis of accounting. Under the cash basis of accounting revenues are recognized when received and expenses recognized when the disbursement is made.

Note 2: Traffic Receipt/Disbursement Categories -Transactions resulting from summary proceedings for offenses arising under the Pennsylvania Motor Vehicle Code and violations of local parking ordinances.

Note 3: Non-Traffic Receipt/Disbursement Categories -Transactions resulting from non-traffic summary proceedings initiated by a police officer or private citizen.

Note 4: Criminal, Civil, etc. Receipt Categories -Transactions resulting from misdemeanor and/or felony charges brought by a police officer or private citizen. Transactions resulting from Landlord-Tenant actions or, civil actions filed for tortious conduct or contractual issues.

Note 5: Collateral Receipt Categories - Miscellaneous funds and funds deposited in escrow.

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July 16, 2008

Mr. Dale F. Nicholson
District Court 36-3-01
513 11th Street
New Brighton, PA 15066

Report on Internal Control Structure

We have audited the accompanying statement of account of the District Court 36-3-01, Beaver County, Pennsylvania, for the period January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007, and have issued our report thereon dated July 16, 2008.

We conducted our audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and Government Auditing Standards, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement.

In planning and performing our audit of the District Court 36-3-01, Beaver County, Pennsylvania, for the period January 1, 2006 to December 31, 2007, we considered the office's internal control structure to determine our auditing procedures for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements and not to provide assurance on the internal control structure.

The management of the District Court is responsible for establishing and maintaining an internal control structure. In fulfilling this responsibility, estimates and judgments by management are required to assess the expected benefits and related costs of internal control structure policies and procedures. The objectives of an internal control structure are to provide management with reasonable, but not absolute, assurance that assets are safeguarded against loss from unauthorized use or disposition, and that transactions are executed in accordance with management's

authorization and recorded properly to permit the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with prescribed policies. Because of inherent limitations in any internal control structure, errors or irregularities may nevertheless occur and not be detected. Also, future reliance on any evaluation of the structure, past or current, is subject to the risk that procedures may become inadequate because of changes in conditions or that the effectiveness of the design and operation of policies and procedures may deteriorate.

For the internal control structure we obtained an understanding of the design of relevant policies and procedures and whether they have been placed in operation. Additionally, we assessed control risk for the internal control structure. Compliance with applicable laws and regulations was considered when assessing control risk for the internal control structure.

We noted certain matters involving the internal control structure and its operation that we consider reportable conditions under standards established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Reportable conditions involve matters coming to our attention relating to significant deficiencies in the design or operation of the internal control structure that, in our judgment, could adversely affect the office's ability to record, process, summarize, and report financial data consistent with the assertions of management in the financial statements.

A material weakness is a reportable condition in which the design or operation of one or more of the specific internal control structure elements does not reduce, to a relatively low level, the risk that material errors or irregularities affecting the financial statements being audited may occur and not be timely detected by employees in the normal course of performing their assigned functions.

Our consideration of the internal control structure would not necessarily disclose all matters in the internal control structure that might be reportable conditions and, accordingly, would not necessarily disclose all reportable conditions that are considered to be material weaknesses as defined above. We noted the following reportable condition:

- Improvement was needed in the processing procedures for Jail Time Served Compensation Adjustments

For further elaboration on this weakness, refer to the "Observation and Recommendation" section of this audit report.

This report is intended solely for the information and use of the Office of the Controller, management, and others within the administration. This restriction is not intended to limit the distribution of this report, which is a matter of public record.



David A. Rossi
Beaver County Controller

OBSERVATION AND RECOMMENDATION

Observation: Improvement was needed in the processing procedures for Jail Time Served Compensation Adjustments

A Jail time adjustment is used to record jail time served pursuant to 75 Pa.C.S.A. § 6504 or 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 9758(c) and Pa.R.Crim.P. Rule 456. Time served compensation adjustments can be allowed if the defendant has been sentenced to pay costs and fines, a default in payment has occurred, and a payment determination hearing has been held to ascertain that the defendant was able to pay.

After a default in payment, if a sentence of imprisonment is imposed a written order imposing sentence must be issued, signed by the issuing authority and a copy must be given to the defendant per PA R. Crim. P. 456.

The New Brighton District Court processed 138 Time Served adjustments in 2007 totaling \$(25,864.18). An audit review was performed of 40 jail time compensation adjustments totaling \$(7,005.97) for 36 cases and 21 defendants. The following was noted:

1. For 18 of the 36 cases reviewed there was no documentation in the case file of MDJ authorization for the Time Served adjustment. This amounted to a reduction of fines and costs totaling \$3,617.70 without documented MDJ approval in the case files.
2. Payment determination hearings were scheduled for a date that had already passed in 13 cases for five defendants. None of these cases had documented Magisterial District Justice approval for the time served adjustment nor did they have verification of the past prison terms served by the defendants.
3. After a default in payment, if a sentence of imprisonment is imposed a written order imposing sentence must be issued, signed by the issuing authority and a copy must be given to the defendant per PA R. Crim. P. 456. None of the 36 case files reviewed contained a written order imposing the sentence of imprisonment for the jail time compensation.
4. To be in accordance with payment default procedures as described in PA R. Crim. P. 456, after a default in payment if a sentence of imprisonment has been imposed the defendant must be given a 30-day period to enter an appeal. No defendants had a signed waiver of the waiting period in the case file.
5. Verification of the dates of incarceration was not present for 19 cases with a total adjustment of \$(3,536.14).

Audit Recommendation:

Time served adjustments should only be authorized after a default in payment has occurred.

Prior to processing a jail time compensation adjustment, a payment determination hearing should be held and a determination should have been made that the defendant was able to pay.

After a sentence of imprisonment is imposed, as required by PA R. Crim. P. 456, a written order imposing sentence must be issued, signed by the issuing authority and a copy must be given to the defendant.

After a sentence of imprisonment is imposed, as required by PA R. Crim. P. 456, the effective date of imprisonment should assure that the 30-day appeal period has elapsed, or a waiver of this waiting period should be obtained from the defendant.

Prior to processing a jail time compensation adjustment, commitment information should be completely and accurately entered onto the PA State DJ computer system. The dates entered should reflect the actual dates of incarceration which apply to the adjustment.

A form should be completed and signed by the Magisterial District Justice to indicate his authorization and approval of the time served compensation adjustment. This form should contain at a minimum the date, defendants name, docket number, the amount of costs and/or fines to be reduced, and any other conditions or requirements prior to allowing the jail time compensation adjustment.

An exit conference was held on July 16, 2008 at District Court 36-3-01 for the purpose of discussing the items presented in this report. Those in attendance were:

District Court 36-3-01

Dale F. Nicholson - District Justice

Katherine Stramella - Office Manager

Beaver County Controller's Office

Cheryl Spagnola - Auditor

The results of the audit were discussed in their entirety during this conference.

A form has been enclosed with this report to be completed by the District Court. This form restates all findings noted in the audit. The District Court is requested to complete the corrective action section for each finding. If no corrective action has been taken, please state this. Return this form to the Office of the Controller within thirty days of receipt. This form will be incorporated and become a part of this report. As a part of the Office of the Controller's normal reporting procedure, a copy of this report along with your responses will be distributed to the Beaver County Court Administrator and will be posted in the Controller's section of the Beaver County website.

**DISTRICT COURT 36-3-01 – NEW BRIGHTON
AUDIT RESPONSES
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY 2006 THROUGH DECEMBER 2007**

District Court 36-3-01
Audit Responses
January 2006 through December 2007 Audit

Summary of Observations:

Observation 1: Improvement was needed in the processing procedures for Jail Time Served Compensation Adjustments

A Jail time adjustment is used to record jail time served pursuant to 75 Pa.C.S.A. § 6504 or 42 Pa.C.S.A. § 9758(c) and Pa.R.Crim.P. Rule 456. Time served compensation adjustments can be allowed if the defendant has been sentenced to pay costs and fines, a default in payment has occurred, and a payment determination hearing has been held to ascertain that the defendant was able to pay.

After a default in payment, if a sentence of imprisonment is imposed a written order imposing sentence must be issued, signed by the issuing authority and a copy must be given to the defendant per PA R. Crim. P. 456.

The New Brighton District Court processed 138 Time Served adjustments in 2007 totaling \$(25,864.18). An audit review was performed of 40 jail time compensation adjustments totaling \$(7,005.97) for 36 cases and 21 defendants. The following was noted:

1. For 18 of the 36 cases reviewed there was no documentation in the case file of MDJ authorization for the Time Served adjustment. This amounted to a reduction of fines and costs totaling \$3,617.70 without documented MDJ approval in the case files.
2. Payment determination hearings were scheduled for a date that had already passed in 13 cases for five defendants. None of these cases had documented Magisterial District Justice approval for the time served adjustment nor did they have verification of the past prison terms served by the defendants.
3. After a default in payment, if a sentence of imprisonment is imposed a written order imposing sentence must be issued, signed by the issuing authority and a copy must be given to the defendant per PA R. Crim. P. 456. None of the 36 case files reviewed contained a written order imposing the sentence of imprisonment for the jail time compensation.

District Court 36-3-01
Audit Responses
January 2006 through December 2007 Audit

4. To be in accordance with payment default procedures as described in PA R. Crim. P. 456, after a default in payment if a sentence of imprisonment has been imposed the defendant must be given a 30-day period to enter an appeal. No defendants had a signed waiver of the waiting period in the case file.
5. Verification of the dates of incarceration was not present for 19 cases with a total adjustment of \$(3,536.14).

Recommendation:

Time served adjustments should only be authorized after a default in payment has occurred.

Prior to processing a jail time compensation adjustment, a payment determination hearing should be held and a determination should have been made that the defendant was able to pay.

After a sentence of imprisonment is imposed, as required by PA R. Crim. P. 456, a written order imposing sentence must be issued, signed by the issuing authority and a copy must be given to the defendant.

After a sentence of imprisonment is imposed, as required by PA R. Crim. P. 456, the effective date of imprisonment should assure that the 30-day appeal period has elapsed, or a waiver of this waiting period should be obtained from the defendant.

Prior to processing a jail time compensation adjustment, commitment information should be completely and accurately entered onto the PA State DJ computer system. The dates entered should reflect the actual dates of incarceration which apply to the adjustment.

A form should be completed and signed by the Magisterial District Justice to indicate his authorization and approval of the time served compensation adjustment. This form should contain at a minimum the date, defendants name, docket number, the amount of costs and/or fines to be reduced, and any other conditions or requirements prior to allowing the jail time compensation adjustment.

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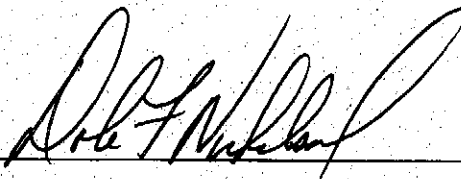
Corrective Action Implemented By District Court:

The lone observation noted in the final audit report for District Court 36-3-01 centers on procedural steps for "time served" adjustments for summary offenders. As noted, such adjustments are provided for under Pennsylvania judicial and criminal procedure. In those instances where offenders have received credit, or an adjustment, there has been a determination by the Magisterial District Judge which focuses on the offender's ability to pay. These offenders have fines and costs previously imposed by the District Court and have defaulted, or are oftentimes facing significant time in the county jail, or a state correctional facility as a result of a Court of Common Pleas sentence. In some instances, the offenders have already completed a long-term criminal sentence which was imposed after the minor infraction and disposition by the District Court.

The District Court frequently fields requests from offenders who are recently released, and/or currently incarcerated. Although, the final audit report correctly recommends better documentation of procedural events leading to such adjustments, it should be noted that a large number of the requests received by this District Court are denied, and not reflected in the final audit report. Ultimately, any adjustments that are granted are done so in the interests of justice, efficiency, and fairness.

Date Corrective Action Was Implemented:

Signature of Elected Official:



Date:

9-3-2008